

characters excite less interest of any kind, than because any which they *do* excite is favourable to religion. No reader is likely to be impressed with the dignity of being a Christian by seeing, in one of these works, an attempt to combine that character with the fine gentleman, by means of a most ludicrous apparatus of amusements and sacraments, churches and theatres, morning-prayers and evening-balls. Nor will it perhaps be of any great service to the Christian cause, that some others of them profess to exemplify and defend, against the cavils and scorn of infidels, a religion of which it does not appear that the writers would have discovered the merits, had it not been established by law. One may doubt whether any one will be more than amused by the venerable priest, who is introduced probably among libertine lords and giddy girls, to maintain the sanctity of terms, and attempt the illustration of doctrines, which these well-meaning writers do not perceive that the worthy gentleman's college, diocesan, and library, have but very imperfectly enabled him to understand. If the reader even wished to be more than amused, it is easy to imagine how much he would be likely to be instructed and affected, by such an illustration or defence of the Christian religion, as the writer of a fashionable novel would deem a graceful or admissible expedient for filling up his plot.

One cannot close such a review of our fine writers without melancholy reflections. That cause which will raise all its zealous friends to a sublime eminence on the last and most solemn day the world has to behold, and will make them great for ever, presented its claims full in sight of each of these authors in his time. The very lowest of those claims could not be less than a conscientious solicitude to beware of everything that could in any point injure the sacred cause. This claim has been slighted by so many as have lent attraction to an order of moral sentiments greatly discordant with its principles. And so many are gone into eternity under the charge of having employed their genius, as the magicians their enchantments against Moses, to counteract the Saviour of the world.

Under what restrictions, then, ought the study of polite literature to be conducted? I cannot but have foreseen that this question must return at the end of these observa-